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Peace and the Reuni- fication of Korea



**Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
World Council of Churches**

1990

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DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

With the sweeping changes in the socialist societies of Eastern and Central Europe, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war — at least in Europe — it is only natural to expect that there will be relaxation in tension and moves towards peace in the Korean peninsula. However, there are still no clear signs of change in the region though there may be developments which have not yet been fully known. Unfortunately there has been intensification of tension in the peninsula during the annual US-South Korea joint military operations.

Parallels are sometimes drawn between German reunification and possible reunification of Korea. There is no denying that the case for Korean reunification is even more strong than that for German reunification. However, the comparisons between the two are valid only upto a point. In the final stages towards German reunification the timing, pace and the manner of reunification have been virtually dictated by West Germany, with no chance given to East Germany to find its feet and affirm its identity after the collapse of the Communist regime there. The political, economic and security issues raised by the reunification of Germany will be with Europe for a long time to come.

The Korean situation has no parallel. It is a unique situation. As the Central Committee's Policy Statement said :

"The immense tragedy of the division of Korea is still little known. The disproportionate human cost paid by the Korean people for the cold war and geopolitics is little known. The continuing agony of the separation of millions is still known. The potential for escalation of the conflict even to a nuclear conflagration is little known."

The two powers, the USA and the USSR are directly responsible for the division of Korea. At this time when the cold war has ended it is only appropriate that they take initiative to remove the external obstacles to Korean reunification. It is always emphasized that it is the people of Korea who have to be the ultimate subjects in decisions on reunification. But both the USA and the USSR which imposed the division on the people of Korea in the first place are duty bound to create the climate for negotiations.

So far Korean peninsula has not received any priority on the superpower summit agenda. The pre-occupation at present is with Europe. Disarmament and demilitarization are for Europe. New security perceptions are also for Europe. There is still no evidence of any real attempt to extend such initiatives to the Korean peninsula.

It is true that the Korean peninsula receives much attention from Moscow these days. One however gets the impression that it is the economic aspect that is given importance. Korean peninsula is estimated high for the economic development of the Asian part of the Soviet Union. This is understandable and justifiable. But it is even more important to look at the political issues of the region.

Taking advantage of the reforms in the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, South Korea is moving in a big way to build economic relations with those

countries there. This definitely has several advantages and may also contribute to a better political climate. It will also provide new channels of communication which can be useful for negotiations. However, in the short-term period this has only re-enforced the isolation of North Korea.

All efforts have to be made to reduce the isolation of North Korea. It is not denied that the isolation is partly self-imposed. But the isolation is also the result of perceptions about North Korea from the time of the Korean war. It is now known that some of the perceptions were due to disinformation and misunderstanding. The international community therefore has a responsibility to look at this chapter of history once again. The United Nations has an important role here.

As the Policy Statement points out :

"A fresh truly impartial initiative should be launched by the United Nations in an effort to rectify its historical legacy of bias and complicity in Korea's division. Serious consideration should be given to the proposal that the United Nations Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea oversee a mutual troop reduction by North and South Korea."

In the context of steps for nuclear disarmament by the USA and the USSR, the USA should remove immediately all nuclear weapons from Korean soil. This will make an important contribution to the reduction of tensions and will be a sign of good faith. Both the USA and the USSR should be urged also to remove all nuclear weapons aimed at Korea. This would open the way for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Korea.

This issue of the "Background Information" updates the story of the involvement of the churches in Korea and the CCIA in the processes supporting efforts for peace and the reunification of Korea. The "Tozanso Story" will have an important place in ecumenical history but one hopes also at least a modest place in the history of the Korean people. It has been a most enriching experience for all those associated with it. The lessons it gives on peace-making and unity of the churches and of people have yet to be clearly drawn.

The WCC Convocation of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation at Seoul in March 1990 became an occasion for the ecumenical community to reaffirm its support for the peace and the reunification of Korea. There were hopes that there will be participants from North Korea at the Convocation. Unfortunately these hopes were not realized.

The CCIA assumes the responsibility for maintaining contacts between the churches in South Korea and those in the North as long as direct contacts between them are not possible. It will continue to act as a channel of communication between the two Christian communities. It will also seek the support and cooperation of member churches who may be in a position to assist the process. As the Policy Statement concludes :

"The Korean division is in microcosm a symbol of the division of the world. If this wound in the human community can be healed, there would emanate from Korea a hope for all humanity. We pray that the cross of the Korean people can lead to an Easter for us all."

Geneva, April 1990

Ninan Koshy
Director

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

Monique McClellan

"In terms of Korea, the historic importance of the Moscow Central Committee was not just that it adopted the first international policy statement on reunification of that country after 43 years of division", says Ninan Koshy. "The fact that in Moscow for the first time church representatives from North and South Korea attended the same large ecumenical conference with the knowledge and approval of their governments was a remarkable achievement!"

The statement "Peace and the Reunification of Korea" as it was issued by the governing body of the WCC is a far cry from a statement adopted by its predecessors in 1950. With regard to the conflict in Korea and the resulting division, the Central Committee then subscribed to the views of the United Nations Commission there, who asserted that "all evidence points to a calculated, coordinated attack prepared and launched with secrecy" by the North Korean troops.

In retrospect Ninan Koshy notes that when one looks at the United Nations' role in Korea then, on the basis of evidence available today, the UN role was dubious. He thinks that is possibly a reason why it has been found convenient not to deal with the issue of Korea's division within that body, and why the international community has largely continued to ignore it. The consequences of the division and the cost of human suffering in terms of the separation of millions of families have not been considered with sufficient seriousness by the world community. Koshy regrets the consequences: "On international issues, the perception and the mind of people around the world are created largely by western media and the United Nations. Holding the North as solely responsible for what happened was not entirely correct, but it has not been easy to change that perception." The fact that the WCC at that time accepted the UN position was also conditioned by the particular Cold War period. In fact, it led directly to the resignation of the WCC president from China, T.C. Chao, and the eventual withdrawal of the Chinese churches from the activities of the WCC.

REAPPRAISAL OF WCC POLICY

When the WCC decided to take another and more objective look at the Korean problem a few decades later, this was also closely linked to rebuilding relations with the Chinese churches and the People's Republic of China.

The 1989 policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea" results from a process of many years of preparation — sometimes in public, sometimes quietly, but never without the knowledge of church partners or governments in both North and South. With down-to-earth recommendations it is also a confession that the churches who belong to the ecumenical movement have not always dealt equitably with the Korean question — and it urges all Christians to intensify the struggle for peace and support the reunification of Korea.

As a policy statement it includes eight priority considerations to assist member churches and related agencies to initiate or redouble efforts so that they can persuade their respective governments to review Korea policies. The various governments should be encouraged to follow the objectives of peace, justice and eventually help to bring about the reunification of that country.

The recommendations to churches include, among others, that the people of Korea should be the ultimate subjects in decisions affecting their future, without outside interference. The USA, USSR, Japan and China should be pressed to state their intentions clearly to pursue the reunification of Korea as a matter of national policy. The reunification process should respect and recognize the reality of the two existing autonomous systems in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, while building up one unified country. A radical reduction of military forces, facilities, and weapons should be sought on the Korean peninsula in order to eliminate one of the major threats to regional and world peace.

THE DIVISION — A THREAT

The World Council statement also acknowledges that the division of Korea and the resulting implications have been widely underestimated. It refers to the biblical passage in Ephesians 2:14-16, where the dividing wall of hostility is broken down, as a reflection of the hopes and promise for the long-suffering Korean people. And as a confession of guilt the World Council's member churches acknowledge: "We confess that we have not always dealt equitably with the Korean question. Mistakes of the past should weigh on the conscience of the ecumenical community and intensify our determination to struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea." The fact that more than three hundred member churches of the World Council are challenged to be behind that confession has not been lost on Koreans.

But in the meantime, in view of the churches' world-wide movement towards peace, justice and the integrity of creation Korea's division is a special challenge. Opposing conceptions of justice have been created and systematized there, and under the code word "security" a continual state of confrontation remains imposed. The largest concentration of military force in the world is focussed on the Korean peninsula. Korea remains technically at war.

As far as the question of reunification is concerned, Ninan Koshy calls attention to the fact that until recently it was illegal even to discuss it in public in Korea. Although the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCCK) defied the restrictions in many ways, it was difficult to have a full representation of Korean churches when the issue was discussed at ecumenical meetings.

There remains a section in some of the churches in South Korea which is opposed to any discussion of reunification because of their strong anti-communist stance. Still, says Ninan Koshy, in the process of preparation of the WCC statement it was eventually possible to get official support of all the member churches of the WCC and the NCKK. He says that Korean churches now are fully behind the statement; but it took almost seven years to prepare. Yet, one might add, considering the complicated political and social implications at the international level, this is not a bad record.

Of course North Korean Christians were involved fully in the preparation process as well. When the international affairs commission organized a consultation on peace and justice in North-East Asia Tozanso near Tokyo in 1984, North Koreans had not been able to attend, but had sent a message through the Korean Christians Federation. In it they expressed their belief that the conference "will make every effort to realize peace and justice in this region, particularly peaceful reunification of Korea..."

"It was not easy to deal with that communication then", says Ninan Koshy. "Because at the time, some might have said that there is no church in North Korea, that there are no Christians there, that there is a Christian Federation which is really a government front..."

Still, it was the Tozanso consultation which authorized the WCC to begin contacts with the Korean Christians Federation and several ecumenical church visits were arranged. And then, what had seemed impossible for so many years became a reality in 1986 in Glion, Switzerland. Under the auspices of the World Council, North Korean and South Korean Christians met for the first time, since the division of their country, and celebrated a communion service.

At the 1988 Central Committee in Hanover (FRG) when the CCIA reported on the preliminary work it had done to promote the question of reunification, the committee requested a policy statement. Later that year, again in Glion, a second meeting between representatives of the churches in the South and the Christian community in the North was organized by the CCIA. The first declaration on reunification supported by both Korean counterparts was drawn up then. This provided the basis for much discussion, during the remaining months, — substantially between churches in South Korea — leading up to the July Moscow Central Committee.

And finally, a fairly well negotiated draft document was the result of the international affairs commission encouraging consultations between Christians in South and North Korea, among churches in the South, and with other member churches of the WCC.

HIGHLIGHT IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Two Central Committee members from South Korea, as well as two representatives from the North Korean Christians Federation and a few other South Korean participants participated in the Moscow meeting. In addressing the Central Committee, Ko Gi Jun from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who has been the general secretary of the Korean Christians Federation for 16 years, thanked the WCC for the efforts on behalf of the Korean issue during past years. Pleading for the adoption of the statement on Korea he said that reunification and reconciliation was the wish of Christians in North Korea : "My joy at this moment is based on that desire and on our

common efforts so far. Please be assured that we Koreans will work on this further and continuously. At the same time we recognize fully the international cooperation, and being together in this internationally is highly appreciated."

It was then the turn of a representative of the churches in the Republic of Korea, Kim Yung Tae from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, to add his words of thanks on behalf of South Korean member churches of the WCC. He chaired the committee on reunification at the National Council of Churches in Korea: "I feel honoured to speak here at the moment when such a historic document is to be adopted. Next year the World Council is coming to Seoul for a meeting on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation: we are very clear that this event is closely related to the issue of reunification of our country. We all know that sixty million Koreans on both sides are always praying for reunification."

The Central Committee delegates and participants greeted their words with applause and emotion — and spontaneously sang "Laude Omnes Gentes", an ecumenical hymn. The policy statement on reunification then passed with all delegates voting in favour. Ninan Koshy told the Central Committee that for many of those involved in this process, in support of the efforts of the churches in Korea, this has been one of the most enriching experiences in the ecumenical movement.

LOW VISIBILITY

He points out the significance of the process leading up to this vote: "This part of our work is perhaps not the most publicized activity of the WCC. At the time of the second Glion meeting in 1988 we were not at all keen on publicity, despite the importance of the event. And in 1986, when we brought Koreans together for the first time, this was illegal according to laws of the two governments. Yet because our participants needed some kind of acquiescence from their governments, and we had negotiated this, they knew what we were doing and what we were saying."

"So we were more interested in preserving the process by being less visible, as a high visibility would have provoked questions. And in terms of the significance of the process this is one of the important initiatives of the WCC after the Vancouver Assembly. It was not just the content of the statement that resulted from years of preparation, but the fact of bringing churches and Christians of both Koreas together."

As far meeting together in Moscow, it would not have been possible for South Koreans even to visit Moscow until a few years ago. During an official government reception for Central Committee members in the Kremlin, the Soviet Prime Minister, N.I. Ryzhkov had a spontaneous conversation with Korean representatives. "He became really interested", says Koshy, "and spoke to them at length. Pastor Ko Gi Jun from North Korea could speak Russian, which made it easier to have a discussion. Ryzhkov had not known about this process of the churches towards reunification, and he expressed his personal interest and the interest of the Soviet Union in the issue." Pastor Ko appealed to him to help and Ryzhkov promised to do his best.

NEW SOVIET POLICY IN ASIA

Ninan Koshy feels that the official position of the Soviet Union is definitely to encourage the reunification process. In the context of *perestroika* a fairly new policy on

the whole Asian region has also developed, with important roles played by South Korea and Japan. On the other hand South Korea is now trying to promote direct relationships with the Soviet Union, as already expressed through some new trade agreements. Internationally, so far the Soviet Union had been seen as a supporter of North Korea only. At this point it is not possible to predict the influence of *perestroika* on North Korea itself.

"But", says Koshy, "as far as the Christians and churches in socialist countries are concerned, we hope that under *perestroika* some of them will have an important role in the process that the WCC has initiated. We already see a greater role for the Russian Orthodox Church. And in the past we have taken advantage of the contacts that the Chinese churches have with North Korean Christians."

Regarding the continued work towards reunification of Korea, the immediate focus of the WCC will be on promoting direct contacts between churches in the South and the Christian community in the North, and to assist Christians in the North to expand their ecumenical contacts. Ninan Koshy feels that the CCIA can help to promote the Korean question in international fora such as the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies. He says that even the Non-Aligned Movement has not really given much importance to it.

THE TOZANSO PROCESS

An Ecumenical Contribution to the Struggle for Peace and Justice in North-East Asia

Erich Weingartner

INTRODUCTION

By the time of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada, in the Summer of 1983, it was no longer possible simply to reaffirm the responsibility of churches and the ecumenical movement for justice and peace. There was no disagreement that peace and justice are legitimate goals for Christians, but there was a new awareness of the fact that these goals are not without internal conflicts.

For Europeans and North Americans, a number of events and trends underlined the tenuous nature of peace in the North Atlantic: the increase of tensions between the superpowers, the deployment of new nuclear weapon systems in Europe, talk of the possibility of "limited nuclear war" and new discoveries relating to the consequences of nuclear war — what came to be known as "nuclear winter".

They had also been shocked when war broke out between two supposedly "friendly" countries, the United Kingdom and Argentina, over the Malvinas/Falklands Islands. In this surprisingly ferocious war, the two adversaries used sophisticated new weaponry produced by countries of the same military alliance.

For the churches in the North, the East-West conflict was assuming such frightening dimensions that the *peace issue* seemed the most urgent priority, on which hinged the survival and future of planet earth.

Fears about an impending Armageddon seemed rather academic to delegates coming from countries where death in both violent and insidious forms is the daily lot of millions. The economic crisis had widened the chasm between rich and poor, producing increasing numbers of victims of unemployment, inflation and debt, making a mockery even of the word "development". The continued exploitation of resources throughout the world by the North served to reinforce structures of repression in the South at a rate

and level never before experienced. For churches in the South, the North-South conflict was assuming proportions which left no alternative except to consider the *justice issue* as the overriding concern of the times. Without justice, what is the meaning of peace ?

In practically all the public issues dealt with at Vancouver, justice and peace were found to be tightly interwoven. This was obvious in the regional and national situations on which statements and resolutions were passed, such as the Middle East, Southern Africa, Central America, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Lesotho. The resolution on the Pacific highlighted the issue of independence, a justice issue, and the nuclear question, a peace issue.

But even the statements on the International Food Disorder and on Human Rights cannot be seen solely from the point of view of justice. Food has been used as a political weapon, as the statement pointed out, in ongoing wars that claim millions of lives. In discussions on human rights, the question was asked whether it is legitimate to go to war for the sake of the realization of human rights, or conversely, whether the violation of human rights should be condoned for the sake of keeping the peace.

These difficult questions cannot be answered by a glib reference to rigid ethical codes. Answers of the past, when both injustice and warfare were technologically and geographically more limited, may no longer apply in a world where systems of exploitation have become global and where the destructive capacity of weapons has surpassed rational human control. Vancouver recognized that here are new challenges that face Christians at the very core of their faith. There is a need to return to the biblical witness, a need for intensive theological reflection, a need for a sober discernment of God's will for us today and a need for the Christian church to submit to that will in a covenant relationship for peace and justice.

In its *Statement on Peace and Justice*, the Sixth WCC Assembly affirmed that there can be no peace without justice :

"The peoples of the world stand in need of peace and justice. Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the Prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness."

"The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice and threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God's people, is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative of our time."

"The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere, we shall never have peace anywhere."

THE CASE OF KOREA

There can be no better example of the interrelationship between peace and justice than the case of Korea. Tragically, it is a negative example. The Korean people were divided and remain divided by force, an injustice in itself, but they have also been submitted to coercive systems of control which perpetuate this division and are justified by it. The perversion of the Korean peninsula is that opposing conceptions of justice

have been created and systematized in the two halves of Korea, whose security necessitates a continual state of readiness for war. A so-called "peace" is maintained at the cost of the largest concentration of military force in the world. Peculiar notions of justice are maintained at the cost of the right of the Korean people to decide their own destiny. In reality, Korea technically remains at war, and so long as millions of families remain divided, there can be no claim that justice has been achieved.

The ecumenical movement has a long history in relation to Korea, not all of it completely unambiguous. Early efforts to bring peace to Korea played into the hands of those determined to keep Korea divided. Later efforts to support the struggle for human rights and democratization in the southern half of Korea underestimated the dictatorial power generated by insecurity and fear of an external, almost invisible enemy.

There has been a growing awareness that the division of Korea is serving as a justification for dictatorship and that therefore the struggle for peace and unification is an integral component of the struggle for justice and democratization.

The truth of this realization became apparent when churches in the Republic of Korea began to put Korean unification on the agenda of their activities. Plans by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and by member churches of the WCC in Korea were repeatedly frustrated due to pressures from the government. People were arrested and charged with crimes for having studied from a Christian perspective the official positions of the Governments of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

THE TOZANSO CONSULTATION

This difficulty of the Korean churches to deal openly with a question so crucial for the future of their people prompted the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) to explore the possibility of holding an international consultation on the subject. After intensive consultations with WCC member churches, the NCCCK and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the CCIA organized a consultation on the subject "Peace and Justice in North-East Asia : Prospects for Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts".

In preparation for that consultation, the staff of the CCIA visited South Korea more than once for consultations with the NCCCK, representatives of WCC member churches and government officials. At the same time, consultations were held in Geneva with diplomatic representatives of both the ROK and the DPRK. It was made clear from the outset that the question of the unification of Korea would be a major topic at this meeting, and that the WCC desired to make available to participants the official positions of the two Korean governments, as well as those of the USA, the USSR, China and Japan. These governments were invited to provide such information in written form. Indirect communication was established also with the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) of North Korea, which was invited to send participants, as was the China Christian Council in the People's Republic of China.

In this way, all the parties involved, both church and government, were fully informed and invited to make their contribution to the consultation. The timing of the consultation coincided with official visits by the then WCC General Secretary Dr. Philip Potter and CCIA Director Mr. Ninan Koshy to the Republic of Korea and the People's

Republic of China, where they held conversations with church leaders on the topic of the consultation. Although the Chinese Christians were not represented at the meeting, their input and perspectives were communicated to the consultation participants by Dr. Potter and Mr. Koshy. Though the KCF of North Korea was not able to take part, they sent a message of greetings and encouragement.

From 28 October to 2 November 1984, sixty-five participants, church leaders from every part of the globe, East, West, North and South, came together at the YMCA Conference Center in Tozanso, near Tokyo, Japan. The WCC member churches and National Councils of Churches of Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Philippines, as well as the leadership of the Christian Conference of Asia were represented and participated actively.

TOZANSO CONCLUSIONS

The "Findings and Recommendations" of the Consultation have proved to furnish a major breakthrough in discussions on peace and justice in North-East Asia, particularly the recommendations concerning the Korean peninsula. In view of their dramatic consequences, the following highlights deserve closer attention :

1. Peace and justice in North-East Asia is a concern and responsibility of the whole ecumenical family. This is all the more true because the issues are not merely local in scope. They have been caused, aggravated and continue to be influenced by outside forces. Solutions to the grave problems of peace and justice in that region will have to take into account regional and global relationships.
2. At the heart of the conflicts is the divided Korean peninsula. It has remained one of the most abrasive points on the dividing line between the world's two major ideological and military blocs and is rapidly becoming the most unstable, considering the large number of nuclear weapons on its soil and in its neighbourhood.
3. The issue of Korean unification is above all a matter for the people of Korea themselves to decide. What the ecumenical community can contribute is solidarity, prayer and sustenance for those Koreans who are struggling for justice and peace.
4. Tozanso recognized a strong ideological component in the conflict, which distorts perceptions and contributes to a displacement of priorities. In a section entitled "Overcoming Enemy Images", the report states that "particular attention needs to be given in this region to overcoming stereotypes, prejudice, imposed enemy images, inflammatory anti-imperialistic rhetoric and facile anti-communism which do not recognize the humanity of the opposing side."
5. On the basis of the previous assumptions, Tozanso considered that the time was ripe for the ecumenical family of churches to take up direct contact with the DPRK.

Anyone who has followed the growth and development of the Korean church will realize that this last, simply-worded recommendation is far from self-evident. Doubts about the authenticity of Christian groups in North Korea among Christians in the South and abroad are very great.

It was in an international ecumenical context where a major breakthrough on this question became possible. Representatives of churches in the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union shared with representatives of the Korean churches their own experience of isolation from the worldwide Christian com-

munity. They spoke of the indignities they had suffered from Christians abroad at the very time when they were struggling most courageously to protect the integrity of the faith and the continuity of the church under sometimes extreme ideological and political pressures, or even open persecution. They pleaded with the churches of South Korea to believe the theological affirmation that if God is the sovereign Lord of all history, he will leave no people without witness. South Koreans should therefore not be too quick to judge those in North Korea who call themselves Christian.

The Tozanso report consequently stated the following :

"Those few Christians it has been possible to contact in North Korea share the aspiration for unification. Though it may be some time before dialogue with the broader Christian community there can take place, we believe the prayers they offer daily resonate with those of other Korean Christians from whom they have long been separated. This too is a sign of hope, as is the willingness of representatives of the two governments of Korea to discuss matters related to unification with representatives of the WCC."

The recommendation regarding North Korean contacts has three components :

The first is for the WCC to explore, in collaboration with the CCA, the possibility of developing relationships with churches, Christians and others in North Korea, through visits and other forms of contact.

The second is that the WCC, in collaboration with the CCA, should seek to facilitate opportunities where it would be possible for Christians from both North and South Korea to meet in dialogue. Finally, the churches should be encouraged to share with the WCC and the CCA plans for contacts with and the results of visits to North Korea.

This final point was deemed important because behind it was the wish that such contacts should be coordinated among the ecumenical family of churches, so as to assure that the signals being communicated to both Korean governments reflect the broad ecumenical consensus arrived at in Tozanso. The enemies of peace and justice, it was felt, would fear an effective Christian witness in this respect and would seek opportunities to destroy or coopt ecumenical efforts. It is therefore imperative that the churches pool their resources and coordinate strategies in defence of peace and justice.

At the conclusion of the Tozanso meeting, a pledge was made by participants to ensure adequate follow-up :

"We conclude this Consultation confessing our failure to become agents of reconciliation, our tendency to claim that God is on our side alone, our lack of patience, hope and trust in God's love and dominion over history."

"May God bless the work we have committed ourselves to do and guide us as we seek to involve the people of God in all our countries in the search for justice, whose promised fruit is peace."

HISTORICAL VISIT TO THE DPRK

It was gratifying to observe how rapidly churches responded to the challenges posed by Tozanso. By and large, churches outside Korea have shown the required discipline of coordination and sharing after Tozanso, being willing to time their own initiatives

according to an agreed ecumenical timetable. This discipline, has been noted and respected by the parties in the conflict, and has alerted them to how seriously the ecumenical family takes its responsibilities.

Following Dr. Potter's visit to Nanjing prior to the Tozanso Consultation, the China Christian Council invited representatives of the KCF to visit China. In May 1985, a three-person delegation made such a visit. The same delegation also visited the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, immediately following their visit to China. In July 1985, for the first time in over 10 years, a delegation representing the Central Committee of the KCF took part in the Assembly of the Christian Peace Conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

The first visit ever by a World Council of Churches delegation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea took place one year later. An invitation, dated Pyongyang, 30 May 1985, reached Geneva, personally addressed to Director Ninan Koshy and Executive Secretary Erich Weingartner of the CCIA. It was signed jointly by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland and the Central Committee of the KCF. The letter paid tribute to the Tozanso Consultation. It stated the two organizations' encouragement about the decision to investigate the question of the reunification of Korea, seen as the "number one problem confronting all of the Korean people."

The letter further stated : "We agree with the consultation that knowledge of the true conditions of the realities of Korea and the question of Korea must be made available to all the peace-loving peoples the world over." The invitation hoped to serve as a first step in this direction.

In our letter of acceptance, we reiterated our purpose in wishing to visit the DPRK. Before departing for North Korea, we re-stated the WCC's intentions in a press release :

"There is a dual fact-finding purpose involved, related to the two inviting organizations. The first is to discover as much detailed information as possible about the Christian community which has remained in North Korea after the Korean war, during which most Christians fled to the South. The second is to converse with government leaders regarding the issue of the peaceful reunification of Korea and the possible role that ecumenical organizations could play in the reduction of tensions on the Korean peninsula, one of the most militarized areas on the earth. In particular, the question of direct contacts and communication at a people-to-people level between North and South should be explored. The ecumenical community of churches may be in a position to play a modest role in this regard."

The visit itself took place from 11 to 19 November 1985. Mr. Koshy and I travelled via Moscow in order to benefit from discussions with leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church, who reported to us the results of the visit they had received from the KCF delegation.

Our itinerary in North Korea consisted of a great deal of sightseeing, in particular places and monuments honouring President KIM Il Sung. The most significant in this regard was an overnight excursion to the city of Kaesong, which included a pilgrimage to Panmunjon, the village where the Armistice Agreement was signed between the USA and North Korea in July 1953. It is also the closest point of contact between North and

South along the Military Demarcation Line, where numerous North-South dialogues have taken place.

An unexpected bonus on this trip was a look at a section of the reinforced concrete wall built by the USA within the southern half of the Demilitarized Zone between 1976 and 1979. Reportedly, this barrier is 10 metres thick at the base, 5 to 8 metres high and stretches for 240 km across the entire Korean peninsula. With 4.5 metre wide steel doors strategically placed along its length, the wall is an ideal launching base for a northward invasion, so we were told.

During the mornings each day, our hosts introduced us to a variety of officials who helped us to understand the basis of North Korean attitudes and positions regarding social, economic and political development, as well as the principles guiding their proposals on Korean unification.

At each new encounter, we underlined the nature and purpose of our visit, explaining how our presence differed from that of previous Christian visitors. Since we represented the largest international church organization, with over 300 member churches in over 100 countries, an estimated constituency of some 400 million believers, we did not come to the DPRK in a private capacity. Our connection with the churches in South Korea gave our presence its unique significance. It is *their* desire for peace and justice on the Korean peninsula, *their* wish to be reunited with their families and fellow Koreans, *their* prayers for a peaceful reunification of Korea which had brought us to this country. The result of our visit would be shared with all our member churches, first and foremost our member churches in Korea. Our hope was that we might be the forerunners of what could ultimately be a direct contact among ordinary Koreans of North and South.

We had ample opportunity to learn about the "Juche idea", based on the principles of political independence and economic self-reliance, the underlying ideology of the DPRK. Though North Korea has received assistance from both China and the Soviet Union, we were told, it has retained its full self-reliant economy and hosts no foreign forces on its soil.

When we asked about the place of religion in a society based on the Juche idea, we were told that religion and Juche share some common features. Both advocate the destiny of man. Religion came into being to deliver poor people from misery. This is why in North Korea many "religionists" support the Juche idea. The new trend called "liberation theology", which holds that religion must participate in the changing of society, comes close to, but nevertheless differs from Juche in the sense that the latter relies exclusively on human efforts. The DPRK constitution guarantees full freedom of religious faith, we were told, and if religion has weakened in comparison with pre-war Korea, this is due on the one hand to disillusionment with the USA, which had originally evangelized Korea, and on the other to the fact that young people find Juche sufficient for their spiritual needs.

A good deal of our discussions clarified the Northern position on peace and reunification. The North insists that they have repeatedly made reasonable proposals for unification, along the lines of the three principles agreed to in the 1972 North-South Joint Statement (i.e. that national reunification should be achieved independently without reliance on and interference of outside forces, peacefully without recourse to

armed force, and through a national unity which transcends differences of thought, ideology or social system). President KIM Il Sung, we were told, had proposed the quickest way to achieve these, namely the creation of the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo (the ancient name for Korea), which would maintain the two social systems as they presently exist, under a single, strictly neutral and peace-loving federation.

The North is convinced, we were told, that the main obstacle to reunification is the presence of the USA in South Korea, with 40,000 US troops and more than 1,000 nuclear weapons stationed permanently, and annual "Team Spirit" military exercises that employ more than 200,000 troops. The North had always insisted that the Armistice, which had been signed by the USA and the DPRK, must be turned into a peace agreement, and that a non-aggression treaty should be signed with the South, which would then serve to reduce tensions on the peninsula.

In response to a question about the role of the United Nations, we were told that the DPRK opposes membership of either side until there can be membership of one Korea, as otherwise a *de facto* division of Korea will be legalized. We were reminded of the ambiguous role played by the UN during the Korean war. The USA is still deploying its forces in South Korea under the United Nations flag.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH NORTH KOREAN CHRISTIANS

On Sunday morning we were taken to the headquarters of the Korean Christians Federation, housed in the same building as the Korean Social Democratic Party, where we met a number of KCF officials, including Pastor Ko Gi Jun, its General Secretary.

To underline the symbolic nature of our visit as envoys of the three WCC member churches in the South, we presented to Pastor Ko a gift of six hymnbooks from the National Council of Churches in Korea. In return, we were given copies of the Old and New Testaments. About 10,000 of these, together with a new hymnal, were published in 1983 and 1984. Before that, Bibles and hymnals printed in the 1930's had been in use. Everyone present was aware of the fact that this was the first exchange of gifts between Christian organizations in South and North since the division of the country.

Before the Korean war, we were told, there were some 120,000 Christians living in the North. There were 1,400 church buildings, as well as theological institutes and Bible schools. In Pyongyang alone, there were 20,000 Christians out of a population of 400,000 worshipping in 70 churches. The predominant denominations had been the Presbyterian and the Methodist, who were more firmly rooted in the North. The Roman Catholic Church had been stronger in the South, with only about 10,000 believers and 50 churches in the North.

But this was before the brutal and fratricidal war that left ten million family members divided, without the means even to know whether relatives on the other side are alive or dead.

It is difficult to estimate today's Christian population, but it could number as many as 10,000 though perhaps only half of them still practise their faith regularly. Neither churches nor denominations exist today in the North, we were told. The Korean Christians Federation was founded in November 1946, and includes Christians from all denominations.

Roman Catholics were estimated to have dwindled to a mere 800 adherents. There are no priests, and since the numbers are so small, Catholic believers worship primarily within their own families. Pastor Ko had heard that some small worship places do exist, but he had no knowledge where these might be. There was no separate Catholic organization, though some Catholic individuals had joined the KCF. There was no relationship with the Vatican.

Worshipping communities of plus or minus 10 believers gather in house churches every Sunday, we were told. In Pyongyang alone, there are 30 to 40 house churches. We worshipped in one of these on the Sunday. Since fully trained and ordained pastors are in short supply, some 200 evangelists, deacons and presbyters serve the roughly 500 fixed places of worship throughout the country. In response to our question regarding the number of pastors, we had been told that only some ten pastors ordained before the war are still alive. Since 1972 however, the KCF has trained some twenty new pastors in three-year theological courses.

Immediately following our visit to Pyongyang, I travelled to Seoul in order to report to South Korean church leaders the results of our visit. I was greeted with passionate enthusiasm which surfaced despite the considerable layer of skepticism and curiosity that is so evident in South Korea when one speaks of Christians in the North. There is no doubt that the spontaneous feeling of Koreans on both sides of the divide is for mending the rift. At the same time, the pain of division has left open wounds which will be extremely difficult to heal.

If Christians in Seoul showed genuine enthusiasm, hanging on every word of my report, the government appeared afraid even to listen. I was invited to meet South Korea's Vice-Minister of Culture and Information. Although I indicated every willingness to share my experience in North Korea, he seemed more interested in lecturing me about the inadvisability of churches to become involved in "political" questions such as unification. For the Vice-Minister, the problem of a divided Korea is a purely political one, to be solved by representatives of the government. Churches are not competent to deal with the complications involved. He seemed unimpressed by the argument that perhaps humanitarian issues such as the division of families, or ethical questions of peace and justice might be roles which are basic and essential to the Christian faith, and therefore involve activities that churches and Christians have every reason to be engaged in.

As we sought to evaluate this first direct encounter with North Korea, a number of questions seemed inescapable: Will our visit enable other similar experiences? To what extent will it make possible further steps in the process of establishing contact from the outside world to a people who have lived under an almost total isolation for longer than the average age of its citizens? To what extent will it enable bridges to be built between the two parts of a divided Korea, between people whose history has been a single one for millennia, but whose very identity has been bisected within a period of only one generation?

In the last analysis, not what we learned or discovered in the North would be important, but the extent to which we had begun a dialogue which has some chance of being continued and expanded. A positive signal was that no attempt was made by the DPRK authorities to turn our visit into a propaganda advantage. Apart from a tiny notice in a column of the daily newspaper reserved for announcing foreign visitors, our

presence remained discreet. Nor was there any attempt to suggest to us the content of what we should report about our visit to the outside world. "Tell them everything that you have seen and heard", we were advised. If the WCC could do its share for the reduction of tensions, for peace and the ultimate unification of Korea, this would be enough to satisfy their expectations.

PRINCIPLES FOR ECUMENICAL CONTACT

It was clear that although ours was the first official ecumenical visit to the DPRK, its very purpose was to make possible further visits of this nature. At the same time, there has always been the danger that opening the floodgates to ecumenical tourism or denominational adventurism could be harmful to the delicate process of reconciliation which lies at the heart of Korean hopes and dreams. On the basis of the Tozanso conclusions, which had been accepted in principle by North Korean Christians, a number of principles for ecumenical contacts with the North seemed inescapable :

1. To be consonant with the Tozanso Process, any ecumenical visit to the DPRK should have an open, clearly stated mandate from a church or ecumenical institution. The representativity of Christians travelling to North Korea will distinguish the visit from mere tourism, and will dispel fears on the part of Christians in the South that the visit is ideologically motivated or controlled.
2. Any visit to the DPRK should have as a basis an established relationship with the churches in the Republic of Korea. Contacts with the North should not be ends in themselves, but the initial stages of direct contact between Christians of North and South. Persons travelling to the North should know the South, should alert the churches in the South of their intended visit and should take care to report to them the results of their visits.
3. The content of any visit to the DPRK should take into account the interrelationship of peace and justice. In evaluating the result of encounters both in the North and in the South, the extent to which both peace and justice have been addressed should be a key criterion of the success of the visit.
4. Published reports of visits to the DPRK should take into account the effect of such publications, both with regard to the relationships which the visit helped to create with Christians in the North, and with regard to the credibility of such reports in the eyes of Christians in the South. The language used should be factual and tentative, intent on opening rather than closing doors, creating confidence between the people of North and South rather than aggravating misperceptions and animosities.

A MOMENTOUS ENCOUNTER

The first WCC visit to North Korea has meanwhile become eclipsed by numerous historical "firsts". We had stressed during our visit that we were merely forerunners of what was hoped to be a direct encounter of Christians from North and South. Having received positive reactions from the North for a proposed meeting in a third country, we set about planning a seminar on the "biblical and theological foundations of Christian concern for peace".

All the 22 participants at the meeting in Glion, Switzerland in September 1986 were aware that they were witnessing a moment of great significance in Korean church history. In his welcoming address, Ninan Koshy described the meeting as the beginning

of a new chapter in the ecumenical movement. Building bridges and working for peace, he said, had always been major elements in the search for Christian unity.

Prior to the seminar, the five-person delegation representing the KCF from North Korea paid their first official visit to the WCC headquarters in Geneva. They attended an ecumenical worship and were greeted by WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro. They also met with leaders of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation.

This was merely the prelude, however, to a momentous encounter. In Glion they were introduced to a six-person delegation representing the WCC member churches and the National Council of Churches of (South) Korea. Those of us who harboured apprehensions as to how the two delegations would react were to be shamed by events as they unfolded. Though tensions surfaced again and again at the meeting, it became clear in informal discussions during meals and breaks that both sides were expending great effort to make this first encounter a success.

It was agreed that a joint communiqué on political positions would be impossible to arrive at and would unnecessarily complicate any follow-up. The two delegations reaffirmed the role Christians and churches in their two countries should play in breaking down barriers and creating a new, just and peaceful future for a unified Korea.

The seminar concluded with worship, using the liturgy celebrated at the WCC Sixth Assembly in Vancouver. In this way, the North Korean Christians could join with the entire ecumenical community in "The Feast of Life" eucharist. North and South Korean pastors shared responsibility for sermon, prayers, Scripture readings.

The most dramatic moment came when the celebrant invited the congregation to give one another a sign of reconciliation and peace. What began as timid handshakes soon broke out into warm embraces which left no heart untouched. More powerful than any paper that could have been written is the hope that is still alive in the hearts of a people divided now over 40 years. The fact that Christians from North and South could pray and worship together is testimony to the assurance that the reunification of Korea is possible.

Following this meeting, which has come to be known as "GLION ONE", the CCIA began earnest preparation for a major WCC policy statement on Korea. This included a second visit by an expanded CCIA delegation to North Korea in November 1987, in order to consult with both Christian and government officials regarding elements which might be included in such a statement. The intention was not to simply restate positions which have remained stagnant over the years, but to test the waters on the amount of flexibility available for launching new initiatives and breakthroughs.

The delegation encountered greater flexibility than it expected, although there were also a considerable number of sticking points, for example with regard to possible mechanisms for family contacts and reunification between the two sides. The delegation came away more convinced than ever that people-to-people contacts outside the context of government posturing and "face-saving" offer the most realistic opportunities for establishing the foundations of progress. It therefore encouraged renewed efforts to involve more of the ecumenical community in establishing such contacts.

ECUMENICAL SOLIDARITY

International ecumenical sharing of responsibilities and division of labour have been fundamental principles in the ecumenical movement. Those whose churches or nations have been most immediately involved or affected have pledged the most urgent and concerted actions. This has been the case in particular with churches of the USA, Japan and Canada.

The USA has been most directly involved in the division of Korea, in the Korean war and in the maintenance of a military machinery including nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula. Japan's colonial heritage in Korea has been one of the chief reasons for Korea's pain over the past century. The disarming of Japanese troops was the reason cited by the USA and the USSR at the close of World War II for dividing the Korean peninsula. Canada was a combatant in the Korean war, but Canadian churches also feel a strong bond with Korea because of the fact that Canadian missions were a major component of the growth of Christianity in Korea over the past 100 years.

Soon after the WCC's first visit to North Korea, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) sponsored, together with Canadian church representatives, a *North American Ecumenical Conference on the Unification of Korea* in December 1985. It was at this conference that a new strategy, consonant with the Tozanso guidelines, was set into motion. The meeting was followed by intensive discussions between the NCCCUSA and representatives of both South and North Korea regarding possible visits to their countries. Both sides agreed to this, and dialogue and consultation with church and government leaders took place in North and South Korea in April and May 1986.

In November 1986 the NCCCUSA Governing Board issued a major *Policy Statement on Peace and the Reunification of Korea* which became the object of discussions and follow-up actions by the major churches in its constituency. The statement pledges the NCCCUSA among other things to "press for the negotiated withdrawal of all US nuclear weapons in and all US and USSR nuclear weapons targeted on Korea... call for the suspension or substantial reduction in scale of military exercises on both sides of Korea", and to urge "the United States Government to initiate negotiations to end the war and bring about a comprehensive peace settlement in Korea as a step toward the reunification of the peninsula."

In June-July 1987, a top-level NCCCUSA delegation again visited the two parts of Korea, this time led by its General Secretary Rev. Arie Brouwer. In its report after the visits, the delegation stated :

"The engagement of the churches on issues related to peace and the reunification of Korea is a remarkable example of what can be accomplished if the churches around the world put their prayers, energies and resources together. The progress made in developing relationships with the churches and people of a nation about which most of us were almost completely ignorant is impressive and heartwarming. But like everything the churches do, it is patience and steadfastness that are required to achieve the goals we pursue. It is important to recall the ecumenical principle that the witness of national churches is most needed and most effective in their society. While we deeply desire to maintain and deepen our relationships with the churches, Christians and peoples of both parts

of Korea, it is imperative that we intensify our efforts to inform and mobilize public opinion in our own nation for change of US policy. Without this, the efforts of Koreans themselves will be much less likely to succeed."

Following this insight, the NCCCUSA launched a *National Campaign to Support Peace and the Reunification of Korea* at a national conference in Washington D.C. in April 1989. Delegations of the KCF and the NCKK attended this conference as guests. It was the first time that a larger delegation of North Koreans received visas to enter the USA. It was also the first time that such a delegation was able to meet the broader constituency of Korean-Americans. Numerous encounters illustrated the intense desire for reunification among Koreans, yet also the deeply entrenched distrust and hostility which continues to divide Koreans.

In Canada, a parallel process was initiated by the Canada-Asia Working Group (CAWG), an inter-church coalition mandated under the Canadian Council of Churches. In December 1985, CAWG issued a *Statement on North Korea*, which stated :

"We affirm the desirability of the Canadian church to know and understand better the situation of the people of North Korea... We believe it desirable to encourage groups of Canadian church members to make visits to North Korea where possible, to open up people-to-people contacts and to share their experiences on their return to Canada... Since to date Canadian diplomats and government officials have not encouraged contacts with North Korea, we see value in sharing with them such reliable information as we obtain and the results of our own contacts. We urge their cooperation in facilitating people-to-people exchanges both through visits to North Korea and academic and cultural exchanges that bring North Koreans to Canada."

In November 1988 a Canadian Council of Churches delegation visited North Korea and returned with recommendations to the Canadian government and Canadian member churches. An invitation has meanwhile been extended for the visit of a KCF delegation to Canada, which is expected to take place in May, 1990.

In May 1986 a delegation of the National Christian Council in Japan visited North Korea. Their report confesses that "our hearts have been filled with pain because we have not been able to maintain fellowship with Christians of North Korea." This pain is due to a heavy burden of history :

"While remembering the 36 years of Japan's colonization of Korea starting from 1910, it was our great journey of Shalom to be able to confess our many many sins of omission and commission as the very same Japanese who visited such unendurable pain and oppression on the people of Korea. We feel a great sense of responsibility as Japanese for the present division of Korea, with North and South divided against each other and kept under such immense tension. Within this context, while relations with South Korea have deepened, there are still no diplomatic ties with North Korea, thereby making its land and people among the world's most distant from Japan, even though we are geographically neighbours."

In the same year, 1987, an "European Ecumenical Network for Korea" was founded, including the churches in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Great Britain. Among its activities have been intensive educational efforts,

including the provision of information to European journalists covering the Seoul Olympics in the Summer of 1986. In 1988, a delegation of the KCF for the first time attended the Evangelical Church of (West) Germany's mammoth "Kirchentag" in Berlin/West.

For a number of reasons (having to do largely with political constraints in working out of an Asian context) the Christian Conference of Asia has played more of a role behind the scenes than in the limelight. All the more important is it to acknowledge the important contributions made by the CCA with regard to the Korean issue and the Tozanso Process from the very beginning. The CCA's Ecumenical Peace Programme in Asia has undergirded efforts for peace with practical and theological contributions and educational materials intended to help Asian churches become informed of and involved in steps towards the reduction of tensions in North-East Asia, particularly Korea.

The first visit by a staff member of the CCA to North Korea took place in September 1989. It opened an avenue which the CCA is sure to pursue following its General Assembly in 1990.

The "ecumenical discipline" so emphasized by the Tozanso Process has remained largely intact. Churches and ecumenical agencies have remained closely in touch with each other's initiatives relating to Korean reunification and contacts with Christians on both sides of the Korean peninsula. Much progress has been achieved, and the global ecumenical community can take credit for its crucial role in this regard.

KOREAN CHRISTIANS IN THE VANGUARD

As has been affirmed in Tozanso, the primary agents of Korean reunification are the Koreans themselves. The ecumenical community can merely assist in a process that must be led by Koreans. The tremendous advances experienced in the Tozanso Process are due first and foremost to the courageous and untiring efforts of the Korean people and their churches.

In spite of persistent government pressures opposing such activities, the NCCCK held its first conference on "Justice, Peace and the Church" in May 1985. This meeting served as the launching pad for institutionalizing work towards the reunification of Korea within the NCCCK and also within member denominations. Each year from 1985 to 1988, an NCCCK-sponsored conference on national reunification was held. The fourth such conference, in January 1988, concluded the drafting of a "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace", which was officially issued one month later by the NCCCK General Assembly.

It should be remembered that these same churches have also fought and won an intense struggle for democratization in South Korea. They had lobbied with all political parties who entered the first democratic elections in two decades, asking them to make public their positions on national reunification.

The NCCCK Declaration is a document of theological, pastoral and political significance. It tries to exorcize the hostilities of a life-time of division with theological reference to confession, conversion, reconciliation and salvation. It asks ecumenical partners the world over to join in a yearly prayer for reunification of their country. It also launches a challenge to political authorities in and around Korea with a focus for

the hopes of Koreans everywhere by proclaiming 1995, the 50th year of Korean division, a *Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification*.

Response from North Korea to this proposal was immediate. The KCF welcomed the Declaration, and this fact was broadcast by radio from Pyongyang, much to the embarrassment of the NCCK, which was immediately put under pressure by a government still resolutely opposed to having non-governmental agents "meddle" in what they consider to be the affairs of state.

Despite this opposition, the NCCK continued plans to hold an *International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea*, which took place in Incheon, Korea, in April 1988. 320 participants from 17 countries around the world could share in the joy of being able to meet within Korea on a subject which had forced the WCC only four years earlier to seek a venue in Tozanso, Japan. One day before the consultation opened, the political party in power in South Korea suffered a resounding defeat in parliamentary elections. The joy of Koreans in being able to face the future with real hope for the first time in decades of suffering surfaced in the report of the consultation :

"The period since Tozanso and these days during the Consultation have shown that God is still alive and working in the history of the Korean people. As we believe that the resurrection follows the pain of the cross, so we are reminded to trust that the long years of suffering will bring for the Korean people the dawn of a new era of shalom within a reunified nation."

Important developments have occurred also in the Northern part of Korea for both Protestant and Roman Catholic believers. The Canadian delegation which visited the North in 1988 brought back photographs, videotapes and details of two new church buildings which have been constructed in Pyongyang, and the formation of a Korean Catholics Association (KCA). Excerpts of their report :

"The Christian community has achieved a more distinct public presence during the past year with the construction of two churches, one Catholic and one Protestant. These are the first church buildings and, to our knowledge, the first public expressions of Christianity in the DPRK since the Korean war. Both buildings are located in Pyongyang because, according to officials, transportation is relatively easy within the city and there are sufficient numbers of Christians in the area. In both cases, however, the construction of the church buildings has been seen as projects undertaken by and on behalf of their respective communities throughout the country. The Protestant church, named for the Pongsoo section of Pyongyang in which it is located, has been built by the KCF. Adjacent to the church is a new, two-storey office building that will serve as the national headquarters and training center for the KCF. Our delegation was received in this building by the Central Committee of the KCF, and we attended the inaugural worship held in the church on 6 November 1986. We were told that Christians throughout the country had made special offerings to finance the construction of the buildings. The Pongsoo church contains a bright but simple sanctuary which can accommodate about 250 worshippers..."

"In June 1987, members of the Vatican delegation to a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Pyongyang also met with local Catholics. A preparatory committee was formed in October 1987 which began the tasks of identifying Catholics in various parts of the country and initiating the construction of a church building. In April 1988 a delegation of North Korean Catholics

was invited to the Vatican to pursue discussions on how to promote relationships among Catholics and on how Catholics, North and South, may contribute to the cause of reunification... The KCA was formally organized on 30 June 1988, and is in the initial stages of becoming a functioning body. The KCA claims a membership of about 300... The Catholic church is located in the Chang Chung section of Pyongyang. Adjacent to the church is a new two-storey office building that will serve as headquarters for the KCA... Construction was begun in March 1988, and an opening ceremony was held on 2 October 1988."

A second Protestant church building has been erected in Pyongyang in 1989. Individuals close to North Korea have reported that the Tozanso Process has helped not only to free North Korean Christians from an international isolation, but have given them a new respectability and status within their country. For those who have criticized the ecumenical process of being more concerned with politics than Christian mission or religious liberty, these developments must surely vindicate an open, sensitive, caring approach to evangelism, the sharing of God's Good News.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Glion was the site of the second direct encounter between North and South Korean Christians, this time enlarged also to include women delegates from both sides. Meeting in November 1988, in the wake of the remarkable changes outlined here, the group felt that the time was ripe to put on paper the hopes of Christians from both parts of Korea.

It was not easy to come to an agreement on the text which became the *Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea*. This I see as a sign of the maturity and responsibility of the participants. These were not individuals who were giving reign to their dreams, but members of two communities searching for realistic ways out of a tragic impasse.

The *Glion Declaration* contains common perceptions and recommendations for their societies to move towards reunification. It also contains an important theological affirmation that gives reason to a common hope :

"We believe that God is the Lord of History, creating history anew in every situation, and the judge of all human history. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, rejected the deceptive peace built on power, and condemned human greed and arrogance. We believe that the Holy Spirit, working against the human divisions of hostility and hatred, is calling us into a holy community founded on the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"GLION TWO", as the meeting came to be called, declared the observance of 1985 as the Jubilee Year for Unification to be a "decision of churches in both North and South". This is the first time since division that Korean Christians have adopted a common programme of action. Also agreed was the designation of the Sunday before 15 August each year as a *Common Day of Prayer for Peace*, in which Koreans ask the ecumenical community worldwide to join in prayer with their Korean counterparts on both sides. Glion two also adopted a common prayer text, the first such liturgical element to be used by Christians in both North and South Korea on the same Sunday in August 1989.

In July 1989, the WCC Central Committee, meeting in Moscow with both North and South Koreans in attendance for the first time in the WCC's history, issued an extensive and detailed *Policy Statement on Peace and the Reunification of Korea*.

The statement illustrates how the Tozanso Process has brought all the elements of ecumenical peace-making together in a remarkably practical way. It shows how ecumenical solidarity can function as a powerful tool of Christian mission. Though denominational chauvinism time and again reared its ugly head, threatening the process and its fruits, ecumenical reason has so far prevailed.

Still, the ultimate task set by Tozanso has yet to be accomplished. There are numerous further steps — more dramatic and more precarious — to be taken. One of these is a plan for a first North-South meeting of Korean Christians to be held on Korean soil.

CONCLUSION

As the Berlin wall began to crumble on 9 November 1989, most Koreans were pre-occupied by one thought : how long before the wall separating the Korean people will be dismantled ?

Politics is the art of the possible, we are told. But what is possible so often depends on the spirit of a people, on what the people decide is possible, on the realistic assessment of aroused hopes. Glasnost, Perestroika and "New Political Thinking" have made the Cold War obsolete and turned the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe into a region of hope and expectation, into a celebration of the possible. When will Koreans be able to join in this celebration ?

When I stood for the first time on the northern side of the Military Demarcation Line in Panmunjon in November 1985, a tourist bus discharged its passengers on the other side of the impenetrable border. For some time we took pictures from either side. We could have shouted to each other, but we could not go to shake hands. American and North Korean soldiers have kept vigil against such display of humanity for 37 years at this juncture.

Where we stood, we were 70 kilometres from the city of Seoul. Had we taken the Mercedes Benz in which we had come from Pyongyang, we could have reached our friends in Seoul in less than an hour, along the smooth, wide highway to the south.

Yet it took me two days and over 8 hours of flying time via Beijing and Tokyo to reach that same destination. This is the most blatant example known to me of the madness of our modern age. It is also the most agonizing example of a tragedy that has lasted all too long.

It is because the world is divided that Korea is divided. In our euphoria over the conclusion of the Cold War, we must not forget that the effects of that war claim victims even today. The suffering of the Korean people concerns us all.

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GEO-POLITICAL CHANGES AFFECTING THE EFFORT TO REUNIFY KOREA*

Pharis J. Harvey

INTRODUCTION

It is a special privilege for me to be with you in this historic meeting. As a citizen of the United States, whose actions divided your land, as well as a missionary of the United Methodist Church, which has been in Korea for over a century, I have inherited an intense but not necessarily consistent heritage regarding Korea. With that background I join you in fervent prayer that the faith we all confess may be an instrument for unity and peace for Korea and the world.

I am also struck by the swift pace of history. It was only four years ago that some of us gathered at Tozanso, Japan to initiate a process that few believed would yield fruit so rapidly. Four years later, a number of national and international church delegations have visited the DPRK and the ROK, an international Christian conference on peace and unification has been held on Korean soil, two meetings with Christian representatives from both parts of Korea have now taken place, Catholic as well as Protestant churches have been built in Pyongyang, and dialogue has also begun between the Vatican and authorities of the DPRK. The movement of the Holy Spirit continues to sweep through our time in quite surprising ways.

While we are all aware of the limitations and obstacles with which this process has had to cope, nevertheless, I join you all in thanking God that we have come to this place. We are still in the wilderness, but the landscape is growing less desolate as we begin to glimpse the promised land on the horizon, and we have been given the manna we need for our journey.

I have been asked to speak about the changing geo-political context for reunification in Korea. That is a dauntingly complex and fast-changing topic, about which I make no pretence of comprehensive understanding.

* Text of presentation at the Glion Two meeting in November 1988 — updated and revised.